

Chronic Wasting Disease in Wisconsin Deer

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The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) began monitoring the state's wild white-tailed deer for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in 1999. Three positive deer were identified from Dane County through random testing of hunter harvested deer in November 2001. These WI index cases represented the first cases of CWD detected in wild white-tailed deer east of the Mississippi River. Over 40,000 wild deer were tested in statewide surveillance in 2002-03, and 205 CWD positive deer were identified in five southern counties. In 2003-04 over 15,000 deer were tested, of which 116 tested positive. In 2004-2005 over 19,000 deer were tested with 145 which tested positive, bringing the total number of southern counties with a positive wild deer to eleven.

To date, over 24,000 wild deer have been tested during the 2005-2006 season. Currently 168 deer have tested positive during this season, (see Table 1). For this season 15 positives have been identified in the herd reduction zone, mainly in the southeastern counties of WI. These positives could be a result of the mandatory head collection which occurred in the southeastern counties this year and therefore built up the sample sizes associated with the surveillance goals. The majority of the positives, over 80%, are still being found in a 126-mi² area bounded by Spring Green, Mazomanie, Black Earth, Mount Horeb, and Ridgeway in Dane and Iowa counties.

The 2005-2006 season marked the beginning of a second round of statewide surveillance. Over a three year period each of the remaining three regions in the state (northeast, west central, northern) will be collecting heads for surveillance purposes. This year the northeast region of Wisconsin collected samples during the Zone T and nine day gun hunts. During the Zone T hunt, 1,000 deer samples were collected throughout the region. During the gun deer hunt, 3,500 deer samples were collected, bringing the total number of deer tested from this region to approximately 4,500.

Analysis of age composition of positive deer has shown that very few fawns are infected; only 12 out of about 10,000 tested to date. The prevalence of the disease increases with age and the rate of increase is faster in males than in females. Further CWD surveillance and monitoring will help the state further understand and control this disease.

Table 1. *Wisconsin CWD Surveillance in 2005-2006:*

DNR Zone	# Sampled	# Analyzed	Positive for CWD
Disease Eradication Zone	8,563	8,398	153
Herd Reduction Zone	11,019	11,002	15
Remainder of Wisconsin	5,184	5,170	0
Total Sampled Statewide	24,766		
Total Analyzed Statewide		24,570	
Total Positive Statewide			168

For more detailed and updated CWD information, see the WDNR CWD website at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/whealth/issues/CWD/index.htm>